A Historical Study on Sri Narampunathar Temple Tiruppudaimarudur

Dr. R.Selvaraju
Assistant Professor of History (Stage III), Directorate of Distance Education-B.Ed, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli-12

***Abstract*- The present study focuses on the historical temple of Sri Narampunathar Temple Tiruppudaimarudur, Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. The present research explains the structural architecture as well as sculptural art of the early Pandyas, Cholas, and later Pandyas in the Narampunathar - Gomathiamman temple at Tiruppudai marudur. Moreover, the study describes the historical significance of study area, temple, and original grown of the temple. The researcher has adopted a descriptive research method in the present historical study. In addition, historical methodology is adopted for observing, recording, describing, analyzing, interpreting and comparing the data, which is collected during the courses of research on the basis of dynastic affiliation and chronology, the temple selected for the present study is classified into three groups namely Early Pandya, the later Cholas and the Later Pandyas. The finding of the study reveals that the past ancient greatness of Sri Narambunather temple played an important role in the development of Saivism in South India.**

***Index Terms*- Narampunathar temple, architecture, sculpture, festivals, poojas.**

INTRODUCTION

Religion plays an important role among the people. In India, majority of the people follow Hindu religion. Every religion system consists of some beliefs and religious practices. Hinduism consists of six systems namely Saivism, Vaishnavism, Ganapathinam, Kaumaram, Souram and Saktham. In Hindu Religion, Saivaites follow Lord shiva, he is supreme deity. He is described as destruction in the Hindu trinity.

The historian, Sir John Marshall mentioned that Saivism was the most ancient faith in the world. Dravidian, Aryan and some tribal elements also contributed for the growth of Saivism in India. The Lord Shiva wears Godess Ganges crescent moon and Konrai garland. He is also called by general names like Alamaraselvan and Aikelu Kadavul. Moreover Called as Mukkatselvan, he has three eyes. The representation of Siva found as Linga and as Icon in the Sangam age. And also, Siva is worshipped in the form of a stump of wood known as the Kandu. Tamil poet Nachinarkkinniyar describes Kandu as "Deivam Uraiyumtari".

The sangam age declined due to weakness of cheras, cholas and pandyas in the middle of third century A.D to Sixth Century A.D. Tamil Nadu was ruled by Kalabhras. They suppressed the domination of Hindu religion including Saivism and Encouraging Jainism and Buddhism. During the end of the Kalabhra rule Saivism began. Thus, the religion plays a significant role in the society.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present work aims at high lighting the development of structural architecture as well as sculptural art of the early Pandyas, Cholas, and later Pandyas in the Narampunathar - Gomathiamman temple at Tiruppudai marudur. The architecture and sculpture underwent a great deal of development experimentation, influence mutual exchange and standardization under the liberal and consistent support of these dynasties during such period. The objective of this study is describing the historical significance of this place, temple, and original grown of the temple. Contribution of various rulers to the temple poojas and festivals and rule of the temple to the society another objective is to bring out the spiritual and cultural rule of the temple among the people of this region.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the present work is confined to the architectural and sculptural study of Sri Narampunathar - Gommathiamman temple. Tiruppudai marudur in Ambasamudram taluk belonging to the early pandyas. Later Cholas, Later Pandyas and Nayaks the structures that were added later especially the Amman shrine and Durga shrine

to the original layout or elevation during the later Pandya period or modern times were also includes the bronze images and the presiding deity of the temple.

HYPOTHESIS

- The following central hypothesis are formulated and tested in this work. Temple created awareness among the people. It gives economic impressments in their life give employment to the poor and disadvantaged.
- Temple is the best tools to make the people to pious and obedience, Thiruppudai marudur village is inhabited by various communities like Bhiramins, Nadar, Yadavar, Maravar, Carpenter and Vellalar. The notable feature is that the peaceful coexistences prevail among these various communities.
- Thaipusam, Adi thabasu, Thiruvathirai and car festival are very popular among the people and these festivals play as a major role to establish the cultural unity.

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY

The source materials used to do this research work can be divided into two categories as primary and secondary. The former include temple inscriptions, sculptural specimens and epigraphically evidences and the latter consists of books published, an unpublished articles, journals, thesis dissertations handbooks. Census reports, Gazetteers, Souvenirs and deities.

Archaeological survey of India's Annual reports on India Epigraphy 1905, 1916. Epigraphic Indica and South Indian inscription Vol. XIV also give information about devadhana lands and donation allotted to the temple. The sthalapurana of the temple provides valuable information regarding the festivals, structures the temple; poojas and festivals furnish first hand information. The administrative records of the temple are found in the office of the Executive officer of the temple in Tiruppudaimarudur.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Banarjee. N.R (1962) and Mathruboothalingam (1969) gave an attention only on Tiruvalisvaram temple, while the former can controls on architectural and sculptural contents of the temple, the later deals with only a few sculptural representations in it.

Bala Subramanyan, S.R. (1975) focuses on Sri Narambunathar – Gomathi amman temple, Tiruppudai Marudur, which he provides more scope for further investigation of the architectural and sculptural details of the Sri Narampunathur temple at Tiruppudai Marudur.

Ganapathi Subbiah (1977) deals with the architectural details of the three early pandya temples at Kovilkulam Ambasamudiram and Tiruvalisvaram, it fails to take into account about the Narambunathar temple at Tiruppudaimarudur.

Soundara Rajan. K. (1983) discussed about the certain important architecture characteristics of Raja Gopalaswamy temple (Mannarkoil) Tiruvalisvara (Tiruvalisveram) and (Ambasamudram).

SECONDARY SOURCES

A History of Tinnevelly by R.Caldwell and Tirunelveli District Gazetteer by H.R.Pate A manual of Tinnevelly District by A. Stuart form an important secondary sources throw a mine of information regarding the general history of the Tiruppudai marudur and Narampunathar temple.

All the available literary works and other sources do not give a full picture of Tiruppudaimarudur and its Sri Narampunather and Gomathiamman temple in respect of historic, socio, religious, artistic and architectural features. Hence attempt is made in made in this thesis to examine the history of Narambunather - Gomathi Amman temple in Tiruppudai Marudur in a very detailed manner.

METHODOLOGY

The present research investigates the history of Tiruppudai marudur and the architectural beauty and sculptural art of the Sri Narampunather temple. Historical methodology is adopted for observing and recording, describing, analyzing, interpreting and comparing the data collected during the courses of research on the basis of dynastic affiliation and chronology, the temple selected for the present study is classified into three groups namely Early Pandya, the later Cholas and the Later Pandyas.

Descriptive method is adopted in the present research to study the Land and people, structure of the temple, poojas and festivals art and architecture and sculptural importance of the temple.However analytics and comparative approaches are also adopted in the Present study.

LAND AND PEOPLE OF TIRUPPUDAIMARUDUR

- Tiruppudai marudur, in the present Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu is small village located in picturesque surroundings on the banks of the

river Tamraparani very near where it joins with Kadana river.

- It is bounded on the north by the historic place called Mukkudal, on the south by Athazhanallur, on the west by Tamiraparani river and on the east by Thiruppuvanam and Arikesavanallur.It covers a total area of 503.65.0 hect. Lands.
- The temple Narampunathar, facing east, is located on a beautiful bend of the Tamiraparani river and with the various additions made to it in later times, the entire temple presents a picturesque scene. The inscriptions on the walls of this temple refer to the deity as Putarjunesvarar.
- After Independence, there started a Panchayat office at Tiruppudaimarudur to have a proper administration of the village. It was established on 21st September 1962. Now Mr.P. Muthu Iyyappan is the President of the Tiruppudai marudur Panchayat.
- The temple is surrounded by streets invariably occupied by the Brahmins. The Saiva Brahmins live in the immediate neighbourhood of the temple. Communal settlements are indeed the order of the day in the ancient and medieval times. Only in the recent decades some changes have been occurred towards a free mixing of the communities.
- The present Tiruppudaimarudur area was under the control of the early Pandyas of Madurai. This can be inferred from the inscriptions found at Tiruppudaimarudur and the surrounding places such as Tiruppudai Marudur, Kovilkulam and Singampatti.
- The ancient pandyas divided Tirunelveli region into thirteen subdivisions and among them Valuthivala nadu, Vaikuntha Valanadu and Sundara Pandya Venrumumudi Sudiya Parantaka Valanadu Mullinadu denotingTiruppudaimarudur were important divisions.

STRUCTURE OF THE TEMPLE

- The temple epigraphs mention the date of construction and person responsible for the same, early structures of the temple was constructed by the early pandyas, later Cholas, later pandyas, Vijayanangar and Nayaks expanded them by various structural improvements. The king of Madurai, Maravarman and his son had built a small temple in 650 BC. After that, Pandians, Vijayanagar and Kalakkad kings expanded the temple. Situated in 6 acres of land, Tiruppudaimarudur Temple's compound walls measure 575 feet in length.

From outside, the temple tower can be seen to go up in five layers like a step pyramid. It is heavily embellished with figures from Hindu mythology. The name Tiruppudai marudur consists of two words 'Tiru denotees holiness. Pudaimarudur means village situated near the Sivalinga kept under Marutha tree·There are many interesting accounts relating to this temple. Narumpunatha means· The Lord situated amidst of fragrant flowers

ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE TEMPLE

Garbhagraha

- The garbhagraha is 6.17 ms (20' 3") square, the adhishthanam measures 1.45 ms (4' 9") in height from the ground level. Each free wall of the garbhagraha is divided into three vertical elements, each decorated with a Koshta-Panchara, and separated from one another by low recesses.
- The width of the central element is 3.12 ms (10' 3"). After the antarala, there is an ardhamandapa, which houses a number of fine bronzes. In the southwestern corner, facing east, is a bronze of Chandrasekar and Manonmani on the northern side, along the wall, there are images of Nataraja and Sivakami Amman, Sri Perumal and Kankalamurti, the last one a very fine figure.

Arthamandapa

The arthamandapa reflects similar architectural characteristics in the concerned sanctum in all aspects, except the walls and kapotas. The walls as they have been shrunk, always avoid niches and carry lesser number of pilasters than the sanctum. The kapotas bear only two kudus irrespective of their number in the sanctum. The arthamandapa is rectangular in shape and is with a circumambulatory passage and tirru-churrumaligai. The garbhagriha and the antarala constitute one unit on a common plinth, while the arthamandapa is at a lower level, from which the antarala is reached by a flight of three steps.

There are four pillars in the arthamandapa in the traditional Imperial Chola style, round and capped by a plain carbel with beveled edges. The Arthamandapa is considered as the shoulder of the deity of the

shrine. The flat roof (42x45) of Arthamandapa which remains part and parcel of the cell arises at a height of about 9ft.

FIRST PRAKARA

The first prakara is also called karuvarai prakara. A platform shape encircles sanctum- sanctorum and Arthamandapa. On three sides of the prakara walls encircle it leading to front portion of arthamandapa in which one door and two ways on each side in north and south.

Mahamandapa

In front of the Arthamandapa, there is a covered hall known as the Mahamandapa supported by ten stone pillars in two rows and the height of each pillar is 10ft and 2 ft width. The pillars have the gap of 10ft to each other. The Mahamandapa consists of 35ft length and 50ft width. All the pillars have floral designs and variety of animal structure decorations.

SECOND PRAKARA

The second prakara is also known as Talavarisai prakara. It is located between the garbagraha prakara and Seevili prakara.

THIRD PRAKARA

- It is called Seevili prakara. To enter this prakara, there is an entrance situated in the middle of the southern side of the Mahamandapa. In this prakara, madappalli, temple Executive office, Vinayagar shrine, Yagasalai and Alankara mandapa are located.
- The Mural paintings are seen on the interior walls of the main tower. The paintings are rich in historical detail and contemporary expression.
- Tiruppudaimarudur Temple’s gopuram has five layers. There are many niches in the walls with gods and goddesses. The paintings on the gopuram are so detailed that it attracts the attention. The four styles of temple architecture of the Pandiyas, Chera, Chola and Vijayanagara dynasties add distinction to this temple.

Alankaramandapa

Another important mandapa of the temple is the Alankara mandapa which is situated in between the southern side of the kodimara mandapa of the Amman shrine and the north side of the muka mandapa of the main shrine.It is supported by 30 pillars of 4 rows. In between the second and third pillars, 2 feet platform is erected compound wall of the temple is of 103 feet and 103 feet width.

Mukamandapa

Next to the mahamandapa, mukamandapa is situated. It is supported by 36 pillars of 4 rows with 9 pillars each. At the entrance of mahamandapa and the western wall of mukamandapa, image of vinayaka and subramanya are erected on both sides of south and north respectively. This mandapa is 73 feet length and 63 feet width .

FOURTH PRAKARA

It is known as outer prakara. This fourth prakara is situated out of the compound walls of the temple. The main entrance of the temple is located on the south-eastern side of the compound wall. The main door is of 10 feet height and 10 feet width. The compound wall of the temple is 25 feet height.

Kodimaramandapa

In front of the Mukamandapa and outer prakara, another mandapa called Kodimaramandapa of the main shrine is situated. It is supported by 70 pillars of 6 rows having 12 pillars on each row.

PANJAS KOSH

The koshtapanjaras which were first introduction in Tamilnadu by pallavas at Mamallapuram, later became developed elaborately in a fascinating forms under the cholas and the nayaks. Kapotas in lieu of toranas, advanced makara toranas with a row of simhas replacing the usual motif, new varieties of decoration in the various mouldings of the pilasters, very large padma with sharp petals projecting out of the palaka and tenon-boss corbels are some of the designs in the temple.

MONTHLY PUJAS

Every month pirathosam is conducted two days.On the pirathosam days of every month lord Natarajar and Thayar Gomathi amman goes on procession.Sathurthasi is celebrated in this temple, every Monday and full moon day.

Special abishekams are conducted to the sixty three nayanmars on their birthday stars. In the Tamil month of Thai (January), Thaipoosam festival celebrated 10 days for every year in grant manner. Nearly 50,000 people used to participate in this festival: On the 10th day of the festival there is a car festival in the temple.

ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPLE

In the early Pandya period, temple was administered by the village assembly. During the chola period temples were administered by the mahasabha and members of Chathurvethimangalam with the act of 1951.Narambunathar temple was come under the

control of executive officers of Hindu religious endowment board.

From 1st January 1975, the temple was brought under the direct control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu by the Act of 1974.As per this Act, an Executive officer in the cadre of Assistant Commissioner was appointed by the Government for the proper administration of the temple.Apart to him, there is a Board (Advisory body) of five members to take necessary administrative decision and advice the Executive officer in his day-to-day temple administration

CONCLUSION

The temple has a major share as court of justice, centre of learning, library, art and culture, public record office, employer, consumer, bank and feeding centre.

The inscription of early pandya later cholas, later pandyas and Nayak rulers of the temple helped the assign the date of construction of various structures of the temples.The existing main structures of the temple are assignable in the early years of pandyas. The research reveals the past ancient greatness of Sri Narambunather temple and its role in the development of saivism in south India.

The epigraphs of the temple study reveals the socio, economic condition of society and various varieties of endowments granted to the temple by them rulers of Tamil Nadu and the common folk of the society endowed many kinds of the endowments for the maintenance of the temple. The most important festivals both from the historical and religious points of view of this temple is the Thaipusam festival of Tamil month of Thaipusam, the poojas and festivals performed in the temple play a vital role in linking the people with temple and instill bhakthi in the minds of people and devotees. This temple has its impact in every walk of life of people.

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